

**Students should use a narrative method that presents a thesis statement with supporting proofs.**

**Essay X Style**

**Opening**

**Thesis – Last sentence in the first paragraph**

**Proofs-At least three proof paragraphs**

**Restate Thesis**

**Clincher – A wonderful quote to complete the paper**

**Students' proposed thesis statement:**

Oedipus' blind steps lead him toward self-awareness and the loss of his throne, family, and vision.

Oedipus' blindness--shown by his disregard of the oracles, pride, and attempts to change his fate-- lead to the loss of his family, throne, and physical vision.

**What is a narrative paper?**

\*Narrative evidence is simply a little story, anecdote and/or text quotes that helps give credence to a thesis. Teachers often use the narrative style.

\*Support your points through use of narration.

\*Present the points to be developed in your thesis.

\*Then, in essence, choose texts from the play to support your thesis.

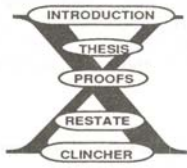
\*Remember to give detail so the reader can understand the references to the text support.

**Inline Quotations to Prove a Thesis**

**Example:**

Oedipus stumbles toward his destiny and his pride drives him to declare, "I answered the riddle by my own intelligence" (Sophocles 27).

In an inline direct quote, place the direct words of the author in quotation marks. Then cite the source by giving the author in the sentence and the page number in a parenthesis, or give both author's last name and page number in the parenthesis. (See the example above)



## **A Technique for Developing Essays from Advanced Placement English Manual by Anna Lee Gibson**

One of the most difficult tasks facing the serious student--or anyone else, for that matter--is the presentation of knowledge in a well-organized form. This section of Advanced Placement English Online presents an overall plan that will assist any student to write with more clarity and precision.

Please remember this section of the course is concerned with writing analytical essays, and techniques for writing these essays can be learned. In other words, even though individuals may believe they have no writing ability, the writing process can be mastered. Creativity is helpful but not necessary. In fact, many very creative individuals feel stifled by the formality of the writing process involved in this type of technical writing. High school students are accustomed to giving free vent to their thoughts when writing essays; this habit is not acceptable in formal or analytical writing.

Surely an individual would not begin a long journey without a map and some idea of a destination; the same idea holds true for answering an essay question. Therefore, we invite you to read on to discover one model for writing clear and coherent essays.

### **The Essay X**

Many writing instructors teach from texts which give a name to a particular writing style. The basic component of many writing manuals tends to center on the same age-old, five-paragraph tradition. This tried-and-true method of organizing information is a favorite of English professors. Many other models work as well as this one, and some writers defy all the rules of process and still achieve wonderful results. Yet, for most students, a beginning model is necessary until they have learned more about writing essays. Therefore, a good starting point for answering an essay question is the five-paragraph model. For convenience, we shall call this writing style the Essay X.

The ESSAY X begins with a broad introduction concerning the work and/or author but narrows to the **thesis statement by the end of the first paragraph.**

The next three paragraphs are narrower and more focused on proving the thesis statement by using **facts, quotes, texts, and critical interpretations.**

**The best order of presentation for these middle paragraphs is the weakest proof first. Thus, the second paragraph in your essay should contain the proof you believe is the least strong; the third paragraph should contain a stronger proof; then, the fourth paragraph should contain your strongest proof.**

The reason for this order of proofs is simple. Most often readers, even teachers, tend to remember best the last thing they have read. Therefore, your last proof paragraph should have your strongest proof because this is the one the reader will remember with more clarity.

**The first line of the fifth paragraph should restate the thesis to remind the reader of your purpose.** From this narrow point, the fifth paragraph should move toward general statements concerning the essay topic.

**The last sentence of the fifth paragraph is often the most important sentence in the paper.** I, and many other instructors, call this final sentence **the clincher**. This sentence is your final attempt at swaying your reader. The final sentence should drive your ideas home with a powerful force. For the clincher statement, we suggest famous quotes from literary works, poetry, famous speeches, popular songs, or student-constructed epiphanies which tie the concepts of the essay together. However, always keep in mind, the clincher must relate to the concepts presented and serve to link ideas of the essay together

## Step One

### Develop a Thesis Through Literary Association

Before writing a single word of the essay, you must know what you are attempting to say. I suggest that the writer **begin by determining a thesis for the essay**.

**A thesis is what you intend to prove** within your writing. A thesis is formed by carefully considering the question posed by the instructor and reviewing facts from the work or works being studied. Perhaps your question is this one:

#### **What is the role of women in the warrior society of Beowulf?**

Your first step is to make a list of all the things concerning women that you have learned in your reading and lectures on Beowulf. One method my students are successful using is a strategy we call Literary Association.

In this method, you close your books, get as **comfortable** as possible, and place **a pen and paper** close at hand. Next, set an **alarm clock** for ten minutes; **think** about all the things you have read and heard concerning the question. Every time a concept associated with women in Beowulf enters your mind, write down the idea. You will be surprised at the number of ideas that surface. (Your first essay is on the blindness of Oedipus; therefore, your literary association would deal with his blind egotism and gross errors in judgement which end in his physical blindness.)

After the alarm sounds, **review the list**. Some ideas may seem unrelated and perhaps these should be deleted. From the list that you have developed and your careful thought on the subject, you could possibly form the following thesis:

**Women in Beowulf's warrior society play a secondary role to the dominant males.**

Once you develop your thesis, the next task is to outline your proofs. We suggest that you go back to your Literary Association and review your list of female characteristics found in Beowulf.

Next, organize the list so that common ideas are grouped together.

**From these grouped lists, choose the concepts which best support your thesis. Select concepts which can be proved by references from the text or critics.** (This is also an excellent time to revise your original thesis.)

**Next, decide which of your proofs is the strongest support and which is the weakest support of your thesis. Outline these ideas in the order that the proofs will appear in your paper.**

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The thesis and outline of proofs are your map to begin writing. However, you must determine the audience for your essay.

## **Audience and Tone**

Analytical writing is most often directed toward your professors; therefore, the writing is considered quite **formal**. The **tone**, which is a reflection of your attitude toward the subject, must also present a serious attitude toward the subject matter.

## **Step Two The Introduction**

Often, the most difficult point in an essay is the first sentence. Allow us to give you a few pointers that will make the first sentence much easier.

An essay's first sentence should inform; yet, the sentence must also invite one to read further. The first sentence should also alert the reader to the subject that is covered in the essay. When using the Essay X model for AP English, **the works and authors being analyzed should appear in the first sentence.** (An exception to this rule occurs when answering a question concerning more than three authors or works.)

Perhaps a student is answering this question on a major test:

**Contrast elements of sight and blindness within the character of Jocaste.**

The student's introductory paragraph should include the title of the work, which is Oedipus Rex, and the author of the work, who is Sophocles. Here are examples of good and poor introductory sentences for the essay question concerning Jocaste.

**Jocaste is a really blind woman.** (poor example)

This introductory sentence does not tell the reader what literary work or author the student is considering. In addition, the sentence is short, choppy, boring and seems basically immature for an advanced student.

Now, consider another student's attempt:

**The ancient Greek dramatist Sophocles presents many aspects of blindness in Oedipus Rex.** (good example)

Here, the student introduces the author and the work in a manner which invites the reader to continue with the paper.

## **Step Three The Thesis**

Once the student establishes the work(s) being considered in the first sentence of the first paragraph, the following sentences of this paragraph should use general statements about the subject to move smoothly toward the thesis statement.

Now, consider this thesis statement on the question concerning Jocaste:

**Sophocles presents blindness as a basic human frailty in the character of Jocaste.**

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Remember the **thesis** is the central idea of the essay. The thesis should also reflect your position toward the question. You have reviewed your information concerning the question the instructor has presented, and the thesis is what you intend to prove in your essay.

Using the Essay X model, the thesis statement is usually the last sentence of the first paragraph.

## Step Four The Proofs

Choose and outline three proofs that best support your thesis statement. Remember the model that we are presenting suggests that **the weakest proof is found in the second paragraph of your essay.**

Move smoothly into your first proof paragraph (the second paragraph) by using three methods which ease the reader into the material. The comfort of the reader is the most important concern for anyone who is writing to be read. There are three basic methods or **bridges** used when moving into a new paragraph.

**These three bridges are called extension, repetition, and key phrase.**

**For instance, suppose this is the last sentence of your preceding paragraph:**

**Women of the warrior society in Beowulf often appear as mere golden shadows whose bodies can be traded for the welfare of the kingdom.**

**The first sentence of the next paragraph could begin with one of the following three methods:**

- **(1) Example of extension:**
- **Male dominated societies place a premium on strength, and negate the importance of compassion and tenderness.**
- 
- **Extension**, as a bridge to the new paragraph, simply means taking an idea mentioned in the last sentence of the preceding paragraph and broadening the idea in the first sentence of the new paragraph. Therefore, this student has extended the concept of the warrior society to become a male dominated society. This makes the reader feel comfortable with the way the essay is moving.
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- **(2) Example of repetition:**
- **The warrior society values strength and agility in battle and often shuns compassion and tenderness.**
- 
- **Repetition**, as a bridge, means repeating a concept or phrase in the last paragraph as a hook into the new paragraph.
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- **(3) Example of key phrase:**
- **Therefore, the focus of this world centers on strength in battle, and often shuns compassion and tenderness.**
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- A **Key Phrase**, as a bridge, means the use of convenient, time-tested words as a step into the new paragraph. The following list contains key phrases often used to begin new paragraphs.

The first sentence in each new paragraph must use a bridge to ease the reader into the next concept.

### **The Proof Paragraphs--Information Please!**

The proof paragraphs must contain information which support your thesis. There are several ways to present this information; the most common are the following three categories:

- Direct quotes from the text**
- Briefly summarized incidents or details**  
(never retell, present as proof)
- Critical interpretation(s)**

Perhaps you have chosen this list from Literary Association as one of your proofs for the role of females in Beowulf's society:

- Views of Women's Actions**
  - women mourn death
  - pass the mead cup
  - show concern for children
  - (in speeches by Wealhtheow and Hygd)
  - women seem powerless

One technique to present information to your reader is a quote from the work. A good way to illustrate the attitude and position of females in Beowulf's era is to allow the character to speak directly to your reader. Your audience can see the fearfulness in Wealhtheow as she speaks in this paragraph.

Moreover, women seem powerless in a society where brute strength is the most valued attribute. The audience of Beowulf rarely glimpses the female except as she passes the mead cup to throngs of warriors. Yet, the reader does view Wealhtheow as she "wearing a golden crown / Came forth in state" at the celebration honoring Beowulf's defeat of Grendel (Kennedy 771-72). This rare and golden glimpse shows the precarious position of women in a patriarchy. Charles Kennedy's translation displays a woman who fears that court intrigues or future battles may ensnare her sons:

Take, dear Beowulf, collar and corselet  
.....  
Befriend my boys . . . .  
I will remember and I will repay  
. . . be good to my sons! (775,778-79,785)

While direct quotations are one of the most valuable tools in proving your thesis, you can also paraphrase (put into your own words) what the author is saying.

The Beowulf poet reveals the precarious position of ancient women as Wealhtheow, resplendent in her golden crown, pleads with Beowulf to remember her gifts and to come to the aid of her sons if they are ever in danger (Kennedy 775-85).

The most important point about this technique is that citing an incident to support your thesis should never, never become a simple retelling of the work. Most high school students love to retell; however, most professors loathe to read glorified book reports.

Another method of proving your thesis is to find critics, experts in the field, who support your position.

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Women were not often mentioned by the scop of Beowulf. In fact, the females were often overlooked or ignored. Alain Renoir defines the female position in this manner: "Wealhtheow . . . is the only woman with a significant part in this overwhelming masculine poem" (20).

Remember, do not simply suggest a viewpoint to you reader; give proof for your position.

## Step Five The Clincher

Once your proof paragraphs are written and you have restated your thesis in the first sentence of the fifth paragraph, the next step is to move smoothly into your clincher.

The **clincher** must shock, surprise, alert, amaze, and/or intrigue your reader. The clincher is your last chance to convince the audience of your position. Make this last attempt a superior effort. Put all your energy into discovering the quote, phrase or idea that will carry your concept home to the reader. The clincher should have a direct tie to your thesis and relate to the proofs in the preceding paragraphs.

Suppose you are completing a question such as this:

**Blindness is a central theme of Oedipus Rex. Within this Greek tragedy, how are blindness and insight related?**

Perhaps your thesis statement is

**Often Sophocles uses physical blindness as a step toward spiritual insight.**

Depending on your proofs, perhaps this could be a good clincher statement:

**Sophocles' characters prove the old adage: "There are none so blind as those who will not see."**

## *Citing Sources*

from Advanced Placement English Manual by Anna Lee Gibson.

You must acknowledge all material used within your writing. Using a source without giving credit to the author is **plagiarism**. Colleges and universities have strict rules and stern penalties for those who steal information from others without giving proper credit. According to the MLA Handbook:

**The most blatant form of plagiarism is to repeat as your own someone else's sentences more or less verbatim. . . . Other forms of plagiarism include repeating someone else's particularly apt phrase without appropriate acknowledgement, paraphrasing another person's argument as your own, and presenting another's line of thinking as though it were your own. (22-23)**

Following are a few examples of correct citing. Please check your MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (1999 edition) for a more complete listing of examples.

The type of citing style now used in the humanities is called **inline notation** or **parenthetical documentation**. References are given in parentheses as near to the paraphrased or quoted material as possible. The inline reference can be done in several ways.

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You may give the author's name within the sentence; therefore, only page numbers are needed within the reference notation.

**Example:**

**Tolkien suggests that the real monster in Beowulf is time (18-19).**

Another method of citing a reference is by using the name of the author along with the page number(s) in the inline notation.

**Example:**

**The real monster in Beowulf is time (Tolkien 18-19).**

### *Citing and Quoting Verse*

In analytical papers you will often cite lines of verse, the MLA Handbook gives this method for inline reference for poetry or plays:

**If you quote a single line of verse, or part of a line . . . put it in quotations within your text. You may also incorporate two or three lines in this way, using a slash with a space on each side ( / ) to separate them. (59)**

**Example:**

**The Beowulf scop described one female's sorrow thus: "And an aged woman with upbound locks / Lamented for Beowulf, wailing in woe" (Kennedy 1868-69).**

Acts and scene numbers for plays should be given in **arabic numerals**. To avoid confusion, numbers for acts and scenes are followed by a **period**. Do not space after periods in a parenthetical reference.

**Example:**

**In Hamlet, Polonius warns his son Laertes "to thine own self be true" (Shakespeare 1.3.71).**

### Block Quotes

I call the block quote rule a "**3, 4 Rule**." If you quote **more than three lines of verse** or **more than four lines of prose**, the lines must be **block quoted**. Within block quotes, the lines are set off from the body of the paper by indentions to show that these are not your original thoughts.

**The rules for block quotes are**

- **indent each line ten spaces**
- **double space (as in paper)**
- **do not use quotation marks**
- **(block quoting takes the place of quotation marks)**
- **reference follows the end punctuation**

When quoting **prose of more than four lines**, the work must be set off in block form.

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**Example:**

According to Gerhard Joseph: Tennyson apparently insists that it is "Guinevere's sin," more than any other factor, that is responsible for the fall of Camelot. . . . the mind may boggle at the Victorian conception of a single woman's power for good or evil, but we are supposed to take with complete seriousness Arthur's accusation that the "loathsome opposite" of "all" he desired came "all thro" his false queen. (173)

When quoting **poetry or plays** (verse forms) of **more than three lines**, each line must be placed on a separate line. (As often as possible, follow the style of placement used in the reference.)

**Examples:**

Perhaps Tennyson's view of love is present in section XXVII of In Memoriam:

I hold it true whate'er befall:  
I feel it, when I sorrow most  
'Tis better to have loved and lost  
Than never to have loved at all. (13-16)

Shakespeare presents his concept of the English oath:

Come hither, gentlemen.  
And lay your hands again upon my sword:  
Swear by my sword,  
Never to speak of this that  
you have heard. (Hamlet 1.5.151-54)

These inline notations allow the reader to check the source for a reference without interrupting the flow of the paper. A listing of all the works quoted or paraphrased in the paper is presented in the Works Cited. Therefore, if a reader is interested in checking a reference, he/she simply turns to the back and locates the author or work in the listing. Within the Works Cited, the reader will find all pertinent publication information needed to locate the source.

## *Problem Areas*

### *Numbers*

When citing page numbers in an inline notation, give the second number in full for numerals through 99 (examples: 1-5, 12-15, 46-84). For larger numbers, give only the last two digits of the second numeral, unless more are needed (examples: 536-45, 504-08). For more information, check 2.4.6 on page 49 of the MLA Handbook.

In the Works Cited, give the page numbers of the particular section of a book that you are using, such as the total span of pages for a short story, poem, or editorial preface. Be certain to give the complete span of the work, not just the pages you have cited in your inline notations (MLA 94).

### *Underlining*

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Either underline or italicize titles of books; plays; long poems, published as books (such as Don Juan or In Memoriam); pamphlets; periodicals; films; television and radio series; albums; musical compositions; paintings; sculptures; ships; and planes (MLA 51).

There are several exceptions to the rules for underlining. Do not underline sacred works; such as the Bible, Koran, or Talmud. This rule also applies to any books or chapters from these works, such as Job or Genesis (MLA 54).

When underlining a title which is already underlined, remove the line from that portion of the title which is normally underlined (Myths in The Scarlet Letter by Hawthorne). These occur quite often in the Works Cited.

### *Quotation Marks*

Use quotations for the titles of articles, essays, short stories, short poems, chapters of books, and episodes of television or radio programs. Retain underlining when used within quotations (MLA 52-53). Do not place titles of sacred works in quotations.